

Patent 9274660

APPLICATION

FOR

UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

Be it known that I, Roger E. Weiss, residing at 10 Mary Way, Foxboro, Massachusetts 02035, and being a citizen of the United States of America, have invented a certain new and useful

METHOD FOR ACCURATE AND SECURE VOTING

of which the following is a specification:

Applicant: Roger E. Weiss
For: Method for Accurate and Secure Voting

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

5 This application claims benefit of Provisional application serial number 60/253,240, filed on November 27, 2000.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a system and method for accomplishing voting using the existing network of automated teller machines.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 The 2000 Presidential election clearly demonstrated deep fundamental problems in the equipment and methods used for voting. These defects have been known for many years, but prior to this invention there has not been an available, cost effective way of obtaining a secure, accurate, timely and affordable universal voting system. The present methods vary from town to town based on what equipment was purchased and when. As a result, the quality of the electoral process is, at best, only fair

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 It is therefore an object of this invention to provide a method for accomplishing secure, electronic, distributed voting using existing automated teller machines (ATMs).

This invention features a method for secure, electronic, distributed voting using existing automated teller machines (ATMs), comprising: issuing each voter unique voter identification information, such as a unique ID number, or an access card that can be read by an ATM (like a

typical bank card or credit card), along with a personal identification number (PIN) that is input after the card is read. The ATMs are enabled to accept the voter identification information. In response to the input of proper voter identification information, information relating to the vote to be cast is displayed at the ATM. The user is then allowed to cast votes using one or more
5 ATM functions. A particular ATM function is established as an indication of finalization of the vote. When this function is accomplished by the user, the finalized vote is automatically tallied.

The voter identification information may comprise an access card that can be read by an ATM, along with a PIN. The voter identification may encode at least the voter's voting district, the voter's name, the voter's address, and the voter's party affiliation. The information relating
10 to the vote to be cast may comprise candidate names and the issues to be voted upon. The ATM function indicating vote finalization may be the "accept" key.

The method may further comprise the ability to display or print voting selections before their finalization, upon voter request. The voting selections are preferably printed using the receipt function of the ATM machine.

15 Allowing the user to cast votes using ATM functions may include providing user control over scrolling through ATM display screens. The method may further comprise disabling further use of the voter identification information upon the tallying of the finalized vote. The method may still further comprise establishing an account for each candidate and/or issue to be voted upon, and wherein automatically tallying the finalized vote comprises depositing into the
20 appropriate account each finalized vote.

The method may also further comprise allowing the user to enter the name of a write-in candidate. This may comprise enabling use of ATM functions to enter letters of the alphabet.

Applicant: Roger E. Weiss
For: Method for Accurate and Secure Voting

- 1 1. A method for secure, electronic, distributed voting using existing automated teller
2 machines (ATMs), comprising:
 - 3 issuing each voter a voter identification that can be input into an ATM;
 - 4 enabling the ATMs to receive the voter identifications;
 - 5 in response to the receipt of a voter identification, displaying at the ATM information
6 relating to the vote to be cast;
 - 7 allowing the user to cast votes using one or more ATM functions;
 - 8 identifying a particular ATM function as an indication of finalization of the vote; and
 - 9 in response, automatically tallying the finalized vote.
- 2 2. The secure, electronic, distributed voting method of claim 1, wherein the voter
3 identification comprises an access card and a personal identification number (PIN).
- 3 3. The secure, electronic, distributed voting method of claim 1, wherein the voter
4 identification encodes at least the voter's voting district.
- 1 4. The secure, electronic, distributed voting method of claim 3, wherein the voter
2 identification also encodes the voter's name.
- 1 5. The secure, electronic, distributed voting method of claim 4, wherein the voter
2 identification also encodes the voter's address.
- 1 6. The secure, electronic, distributed voting method of claim 5, wherein the voter
2 identification also encodes the voter's party affiliation.
- 1 7. The secure, electronic, distributed voting method of claim 1, wherein the information
2 relating to the vote to be cast comprises candidate names.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

Other objects, features and advantages will occur to those skilled in the art from the following description of the preferred embodiment, and the accompanying drawing, FIG. 1, which is a schematic diagram of a system for accomplishing the method of this invention.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a low cost electoral methodology which will meet the most exacting requirements.

The US banking system is remarkable in both its accuracy, security and ease of access. This invention uses certain aspects of the banking system for the purpose of voting. The key elements consist of the following:

1. ATM machines are accurate and well controlled means of depositing money to accounts. These same machines, through simple software modifications, could be used to deposit votes to a candidate's "account".
2. Each registered voter would be issued unique voter identification information that can be input into an ATM. This could be a unique identification number that is input using the keypad. Alternatively, this could comprise a "Voting Access Card" (VAC) and a PIN number. The VAC would have the format of a standard bank or credit card so that it could be read by an ATM. The voter identification information would be issued by the local voter registration office prior to the election. The information would access, or encode, appropriately encrypted information to identify the voter by name and address, to define the voting district of the voter, and potentially other relevant voting-related information, such as party affiliation, which is sometimes required in primary elections.

3. On election day, the ATM machines would be loaded with software that would recognize the particular form or forms of identification information used, for example to read the VAC, and accept the PIN. This would, on demand, convert the ATM into a highly accurate and secure voting machine.

5 In operation, the voter could approach any designated ATM on election day for the purpose of voting. He would insert his VAC card into the machine and enter his PIN number just as if he was banking, or use another appropriate means to enter into the ATM his unique voter identification information, for example by entering a code using the keypad of the ATM. When a card is used, the code information on the card would identify the card as a VAC, and identify at least the voting district. This would bring up a screen, or scroll through several screens as necessary to present all candidates and issues on which the voter can vote. The voter could select his choices in the same manner that menu decisions are made in the ATM, typically accomplished by pressing designated keys on the ATM. Once the choices were made, the “enter” key would be pressed. The software would then cause the ATM to display on the monitor, and/or print out using the ATM receipt printer functionality, a summary list of the selection, and provide the user the opportunity to accept the vote or votes/choices, or repeat all or part of the process, by either repeating all voting screens from the beginning, or allowing the user to scroll back through screens to find the particular screen(s) that display the choice he desires to change.

20 When the “accept” key was pressed, the votes would be deposited to the correct accounts. The software will note that the person to whom the voter identification was issued has voted, and terminate the ability for the identification to be re-used.

Write in candidates could be entered by selecting "Other" for the selection, and by using alphabet keys or a touch screen to enter the name.

Some communities require an ID to vote. This can be done by requiring the ID to be presented when supplying the voter identification information. The use of a unique ID number, or a VAC with a PIN, makes the voter identification information useless to other parties.

FIG. 1 depicts system 10 for accomplishing the method of the invention. The system takes advantage of the existing network of ATM machines 12-14. These machines are connected over network 15 to voting server 16 for accomplishing the invention. The server defines separate "accounts" for each candidate, each issue, and anything else to be voted upon in the particular election. These accounts could be established as simple databases.

Elections are accomplished today by breaking the entire voting public into a series of precincts. This same organizational structure can be easily maintained in this invention. There would be, for example, one server for each precinct. Alternatively, the server could handle more than one precinct and be appropriately set up to tally votes on a precinct basis as is currently done among precincts in a particular jurisdiction.

For private ATM networks, the server would simply need access to the network and be enabled to communicate within the particular network architecture. It would also be possible to connect different ATMs to a server using the Internet as the network. The security needed to accomplish this is already in existence.

The above described system could be used as the sole vehicle for voting or in conjunction with other safe systems. It also could be used at any location on the globe including military stations, eliminating the present problem with military and other absentee ballots.

What is claimed is: